



# *STARRY TRAILS*

*AUGUST 2016*

August has always been my favorite stargazing month! This August will certainly be a blockbuster month for stargazing! Here is what is in store for us: the five visible planets after sunset, the Perseid Meteor Shower and the Summer Milky Way!! Not to mention the spectacular sounds of summer!! Take a minute to listen! Now, let's check out the five visible planets that will visit our evening sky throughout August. About 30 minutes after sunset find a spot with a great western view. Bright Jupiter will be very low and brilliant Venus will be down and to the right of Jupiter. Mercury will be the dimmer object nearby Jupiter and Venus (Illustration 1). Turn left, or south, and bright red, orange Mars will greet you. Up slightly to the left the golden colored object is Saturn (Illustration 2). I hope you get a chance to see all five planets!

Let's head out for our hike. Grab your Starry Trail map, bug spray, binoculars, light jacket and lawn chair or blanket. Our hike begins around 9:30pm in the southern sky or left of the beautiful sunset colors. Once again, Mars is the bright red, orange object and Saturn is up slightly left and more of a golden color. Saturn is an incredible sight through a telescope! Trek down from Saturn to a red-orange star, Antares, the heart of Scorpio. To the left of Antares is the constellation, Sagittarius, which looks more like a teapot (Illustration 3). Between Scorpio and Sagittarius is the best part of the sky to scan with your binoculars and telescope! It is rich with deep sky wonders! Grab your binoculars and take a look!

Head back to Antares, Mars and Saturn. Continue to hike upwards, and slightly right, to the brilliant yellow, orange star, Arcturus. To the left of Arcturus, you will see a semi-circle of stars. It looks almost like a necklace, but actually it is the Northern Crown or Corona Borealis. I think it looks like a smiley face! Right overhead, or left of Corona, will be a keystone shape in the stars. This is the body of Hercules, the bravest and strongest hero (Illustration 4)! Binocular time! Take your binoculars and scan around the part of Hercules facing Corona. Do you see a small fuzzy object? This is the finest Globular Star Cluster (M13) in the northern skies!

Turn to the opposite part of the sky or north. The Big Dipper is beginning to swing down through the sky. Take the two stars at the end of the cup and draw an imaginary line to the next bright star. You have reached the North Star! The North Star, or Polaris, is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. Also, down and to the right of the Little Dipper is Queen Cassiopeia, the W-shaped constellation (Illustration 5).

Trek again to the right and you will be facing east. When looking up, you will see a very bright star, which is Vega. Journey down and to the left and you will come to Deneb. Now go right and you have reached Altair. When you connect these three bright stars you have made the Summer Triangle. Great job! Running through the Summer Triangle is the Milky Way, our galaxy! Pop open that lawn chair or lay out on your blanket. Take your binoculars and scan through that part of the sky from north to south. See all of those stars?! Even if you cannot view the Milky Way, due to light pollution, you can still see so many stars with your

binoculars! Here is a challenge: scan to the left and up of Altair. Do you see the group of stars that resemble an upside-down coat hanger? Cool!

Head back to Deneb. Imagine this to be the tail of Cygnus, the Swan. To the right will be three stars in a line. These would be the outstretched wings. You should also be able to see the long neck and head of the swan extending from the wings. The head of the swan would be directly below Vega. This star is Albireo, which is a beautiful double star through a telescope! If you look just below the Summer Triangle, you will see a group of stars that look like a kite. This is the constellation, Delphinus, the Dolphin (Illustration 6).

Now just relax and look up. August is the best month to see a shooting star. Anytime around the 12<sup>th</sup> you may be lucky enough to see a few shooting stars. The Perseid Meteor Shower will peak the night of August 12<sup>th</sup>. That is the best night to watch. However, this year we will have some Moonlight that will fade away some meteors! Give it a try and make a wish!

**Wow! What an unbelievable month of stargazing! - Next month... signs of Autumn.**

## Highlights

**Aug 2** – New Moon.

**Aug 4** – The Crescent Moon passes south of Venus and Mercury.

**Aug 5** – The Crescent Moon passes south of Jupiter.

**Aug 10** – First Quarter Moon.

**Aug 11** – The Moon passes north of Mars.

**Aug 12** – The Moon passes north of Saturn.

**Aug 12** – **Peak of the Perseid Meteor Shower!**

**There will be Moonlight fading some shooting stars until Moon set at 1am.**

**Aug 18** – Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Corn Moon or the Full Grain Moon.

**Aug 24** – Last Quarter Moon.

**Aug 23 & 24** – Saturn, Mars and Antares lineup in the southern sky.

**Aug 27** – Closest grouping of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury in the western sky.

**Brightest Stars: West** – Arcturus, Spica. **East to Overhead** – Vega, Deneb, Altair. **South** – Antares.

**Binocular Highlights** - The Moon, Hercules Globular Star Cluster M13, Milky Way Deep Sky Objects to the left of Antares in Scorpio thru the Summer Triangle, the Coat Hanger.

**Telescope Highlights** - The Moon, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Albireo, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M51, M39, M92, M13, M57, M81, M82, M10, M11, M12, M27, M15, M16, M17, M20, M21, M22, M23 and M25.

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*Written by Suzie Dills – Remember to download your Illustrations & Star Map!*